REMARKS

Independent claims 1 and 6 which were included in the new ground of rejection set forth in the Board of Appeals Decision have been amended to make it clear that the gas fed to the catalytic bed 6 and flowing through the catalytic bed towards the gas outlet cylindrical wall 8 cannot by-pass the catalyst itself and thus no losses in the conversion yield occur (see for instance the description on page 2, lines 16-21 and page 5, lines 7-13 of the specification. In other words, thanks to the combination between the unperforated cylindrical wall of predetermined length and the level of the catalyst once loaded in the catalytic bed, a "seal" is obtained in a very simple and effective way which forces the reagent gas to pass through the catalyst (and thus to react) before leaving the catalytic bed through the gas outlet wall 8.

In the Poussin reference (U.S. 5,202,097) this feature is totally missing. As can be clearly seen from figures 1-6, the cover 10 never extends to the catalytic compartment 8 and even more it does not remain below the upper level 19 of (catalytic) particles 31. Therefore, according to Poussin a catalyst by-pass of the reagent gas is clearly possible should a free space be defined between that cover 10 and the central stack 9 should the central stack 9 be perforated all the way to its upper end.

It is still the position of Appellant that Poussin does not positively disclose a central stack 9 with perforations extending to the upper and lower ends with a free space defined between the cover 10 and the stack 9 and a cover extending within the catalytic bed. One skilled person looking at the perforations in stack 9 of figure 1 would clearly interpret the showings to mean

that the illustrated limitations define the upper and lower limits for the perforations. This is confirmed in figures 2 and 8, which are a detailed views of the lower portion of stack 9, wherein no perforations are shown in proximity to the bottom 17 of compartment 8. Furthermore, figures 4-7, which show detailed views of the upper portion of stack 9, clearly indicate that the perforations stop immediately below the upper cover layer.

For the reasons set forth above, Poussin does not disclose a method or a reactor having the specific features as called for in independent claims 1 and 6 as amended. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that claims 1-10 inclusive be allowed in the application for the patent to issue forthwith.

If for any reason the Examiner is unable to allow the application in the next Office Action and feels an interview would be helpful to resolve any remaining issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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